Mass-Media and Peace-Building: *Attainment, Problems and Preventions*

Abinash Darnal

Abstract: *In the present day world, no one can deny that the media has a constructive share in shaping the national policies and in decision making processes. Many formal and informal institutions in the polity are playing their respective roles in allocation of social resources and enhancing harmony and order. Following bequest of new strategies the techniques like sports as diplomatic tools in bringing peace, policies, rewards, laws and acts, treaties, mutual agreements, conventions, non-proliferation agreements and disarmament pacts are still in the progress. With the revolution in Information and Communication Technology, one must pay heed to the input of media as a means to achieve peace. Since media is the fourth pillar of democracy, this paper tries to make a comprehensive assessment of the role of Mass Media and Journalism in enhancing peace and order in the present day society. Also an attempt has been made to find out the possible ground of surface in which media can play an effective and unbiased materialization of its role.*

Keywords: Freedom of Speech and Expression, Journalism, Media, Right

I. INTRODUCTION

In reality 'Peace' in itself is a means. However, it is unfortunate that due to the dynamics in the courses of social trends, today we need a 'means' to attain peace. The courses of socio-political phenomenon exert massive pressure on the worldwide, resulting to enmity, disorder, tension, and a social variance that has substantial impact upon the human life. It is evident, since the inception of human civilization, the principal task of the human beings is to fetch order and peace. The history entails, since the materialization of debates on human nature from Sophists, following Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Rawls up to the communitarians, an attempts had been made to attain the long standing goal of peace and order. However, the changing conditions of world experiences are incessantly demanding a new strategy to deal with the growing disagreement and hostility around the globe. Following bequest of new strategies the techniques like sports as diplomatic tools in peace bringing, policies, rewards, laws and acts, treaties, mutual agreements, conventions, non-proliferation agreements and disarmament pacts are still in the progress. With the revolution in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), one must pay heed to the input of media as a means to achieve peace.

The contribution of media as a tool for preventing and moderating conflict is not beyond the world's experience. It is not necessary to justify its role in this milieu. In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet [1]. However, the Mass media achieved its significance in this era of distinction following the end of cold war. The collapse of bi-polarization facilitates a fertile platform for the surfacing of global family in terms of trade, commerce, communicational, cultural, political, social and economic exchanges. Hence there is a need of means that can help in the transaction of global network, and media appears as an alternative to it.

Media plays role both in promoting conflict as well as enhancing peace. For instance the CNN as a media outfit has played a role in the withdrawal of American troops from Somalia in 1990s by showing graphics and pictures of the bodies of American soldiers dragged along the street. Similarly in Rwanda, hate Radio played a significant role in increasing the killings and genocide. In Sudan in 1990s, media played a role in mobilizing public and contributing them to war and conflict by telecasting a weekly programme in television making the fighting in south a holy and made people supportive and involved in Jihad [2]. But, the peace agreements were made whereby the government stopped the programme and media this time produced a new programme that supports peace and conflict pacification. For instance, Radio for Peace-Building Africa (RFPA) is a program founded in 2003 by the international non-profit organization Search for Common Ground. The countries like Burundi, Central African Republic, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda are among those where this RFPA is still in operation. With the assumption that radio is the most accessible form of mass communication in Africa, RFPA trains journalists in peace-building, conflict resolution, and acting on commonalities. To talk on their achievement, till 2010, RFPA has more than 3,000 members representing 100 countries, across Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. They have carried out over 90 workshops with trained local radio station personnel on media's liability [3]. The media's role in conflict and war is not so straight forward. But, while making assessment of the role of Mass media in peace-building and conflict resolution, its importance is greater in extent. In general, media has four contributions in peace building. Firstly, it helps in defining the political atmosphere in which the peace process takes place. Secondly, the media has an active influence on the strategy and behavior of the stakeholders to the conflict. Thirdly, it can influence on the nature of debates about peace process.

Revised Version Manuscript Received on 12 August, 2018.

Mr. Abinash Darnal, Department of Political Science, University of North Bengal, Siliguri (Darjeeling)-734013, India. E-mail: abhinash284@gmail.com

Fourthly, the media can weaken public legitimacy of the stakeholders involved in the peace process [4]. Globally different types of media are utilized to distribute knowledge and disseminating the events. Free-mass media is a tool for the success of democracy. Freedom of speech and expression is fundamental human right which is critical for a democratic institution. In a disturbed culture effective and impartial media are indispensible provides transition towards peace and order. With this very reason, the United Nations Millennium Declaration stressed the need 'to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information'.

There is no confusion regarding the role of journalism in this context. The effort and services that journalists have paid to the society are in itself commendable. Journalism has an ability to counter hate-speech and create an environment of balanced opinion. Responsible journalism does not only concern with press publication but also devote itself to the truthful, balanced and fair accounts of events. In order to achieve this, journalists stays to make judgmental representation and describe reality avoiding unnecessary presentation.

Media being the fourth pillar in democracy will succeed only when it plays an affirmative role and it is only possible when media has pro-peace slanting programmes. In many cases, it happens that the media without thorough understanding of the causes of the crisis makes a judgment, resulting further into vicious situation. Here the media personals part is to develop a thorough understanding of the crisis and convey their readers and listeners in a way that may helps to reach to the level of proper understanding to avoid further indifferences. They should point to the stories that examine the situation in which the dispute evolved and explained why violence has occurred. It is quite evident, after the end of world war, the influence of transnational interchange and the emergence of sharing and shaping of different social necessities gives birth to the importance of media.

II.   MEDIA IN THE WORLD

In the era of liberalization, privatization and globalization, neo-terrorists outfits were vehemently increasing their influence upon the social network like-Al Quida. In an article "Deconstructing the Terrorism- News media Relationship", Jeffrey Ian Ross provides that since the early 1970s, there is an increase role of news media in connection with terrorism. Ross says, many terrorist groups are very sensitive to the timing of news stories and audience dynamics and structure their actions accordingly. For instance- the 1974 kidnapping incident of Patricia Hearst by the members of the symbionese Liberation Army, the 1977 Baader- Meinhof gang suicide in stammheim prison, the 1977 kidnapping of the Italian prime Minister, the 1983 American Revolutionary attack against the Turkish ambassador in Lisbon and the 1984 Grand Hotel Bombing in Brighton by Irish Republican Army.

Nonetheless, the coverage of an incident of kidnapping of Israeli athletes during 1972 Olympic shows the constructive part of media. Similarly, Iranian activists' takeover of the American embassy in Teheran in 1979 helped to focus the attention of the world on the power of Islamic fundamentalism. The broadcasting of 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre tower justifies the role of news media in presenting truth before the world. However, regarding the pacification of terrorism, there is a problem for most of the media organizations. It is so because of the lack of specialists in covering terrorist incidents. Most of the time, the media had to depend upon the reports of a few experts like- *Josh Myers* of Los Angeles Times, *Peter Bergen* of CNN, *Amal Elsana Alh'jooj* of Al-Jazeera and other reputed news media.

The success of media in conflict resolution depends upon its approaches like- developed partnership between members of the media and conflict resolution specialists, non-governmental organizations, funding organizations and the community. Such partnership can facilitate the ability of various media to meet the needs of their audience [5].

Further, the radio as a local media is also a contending medium to disseminate various internal issues. The radio news through various languages helps to reach to the audience of different sections because of its direct contact with the life and experiences of the ethnic people. We see every internal conflict has a history behind it. And the advantage of local media like radio is that it has a deeper understanding of the existing political structures, the participants of the conflict and changes preceding the outbreak of violence. The media therefore not only influence a society by recognizing and addressing the issue before the conflict but also as a crusader for encouraging the conflict reconciliation and societal development aftermath.

III.   CASES FROM INDIAN EXPERIENCES

Today, behind most of the mass dissension, the government is responsible. The government by virtue of its political power tries to maneuver and misrepresent the truth, seizing the right of media from giving coverage of the events. In such situation, there is an urgent need of involvement by the unbiased and free media [6]. Mass media has a limited control in regard to the intervention of government in the internal affairs of the populace. Government and the parties at a time used to adopt either a strategy of appeasement or forcefully banning the media coverage. This is because; the broadcasting of ongoing distortion would affect the position of their parties in the upcoming elections. The instances like the murder of *Gauri Lankesh,* an Indian journalist from Bangalore was shot to death on September 5, 2017, by a right-wing Hindu extremist for voicing against hindutva's stigma, campaigning for women's rights and opposing caste based discrimination, was the dreadful episode in the history of press democracy. Furthermore, the order of Darjeeling hills throughout its movement for separate statehood during 2017, the government of West Bengal banned the entire local news channels, internet affecting social networks as well as bunged the national channels from inflowing in to the spot, allowing only a few of the paid channels to show. In this venture, news channels and Press like *The Wire, NDTV, The Hindu, Times of India* (as per my knowledge,

One may disagree) are now the saviors' of the fate of mass media (if it continuous for same as today). Now, is it a real visage of Democracy somewhere true republic thrives? The time has come to be vigilant towards such paid media who were consciously or unconsciously projecting the good corner of unwrap injustices. The study stressed for an unbiased independent media that can work above from all forms of compromises and ascendancy that can depict the truth by respecting the value of freedom of speech and expression.

REFERENCES

1. The Role of Media in Peace-Building; UK Essays: https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/the-role-of-media-in-peace-building-politics-essay.php
2. The Role of the Media in Peace Process, https://sanjanah.wordpress.com/2002/10/27/the-role-of-the-media-in-peace-processes/
3. The Role of Media in Peace-Building; UK Essays: https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/the-role-of-media-in-peace-building-politics-essay.php
4. The Role of the Media in Peace Process, https://sanjanah.wordpress.com/2002/10/27/the-role-of-the-media-in-peace-processes/
5. The Media's Role in Peace-Building: Assets or Liability?
6. Kuusik Nora : The Role of the Media in Peace Building, Conflict and Prevention, E-International Relations

Mr. Abinash Darnal has currently completed M.Phil from Department of Political Science, University of North Bengal, Siliguri, Darjeeling 734013, India. His area of research interests are Theories of Politics, Rights, Self-Determination and Labour Movement. E-mail: abhinash284@gmail.com Mobile No.: 8759626631/7407043445